SPECIAL FEATURE NO. 3-0968 JANUARY 6, 1978
LARRY LESUEUR

THE BEACH CALLED OMAHA

ANNCR: IT TOOK THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE PRESIDENT OF FRANCE JUST A COUPLE OF HOURS TO GO BY TRAIN FROM THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY TO PARIS. YET IN THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1944, IT TOOK AMERICAN TROOPS ALMOST 3 MONTHS TO GO THAT DISTANCE FIGHTING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE HEDGEROWS AGAINST DETERMINED GERMAN RESISTANCE. VOA'S LARRY LESUEUR HAS THESE REMEMBRANCES.

VOICE: MANY OF THE YOUNG AMERICANS WHO LANDED IN NORMANDY ON JUNE 6TH 1944, NEVER MADE IT TO PARIS. NEARLY 2 THOUSAND OF THEM WERE KILLED THE FIRST DAY OF THAT AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT. MANY OF THEM AND OTHERS WHO DIED NEARBY LIE IN THE BIG MILITARY CEMETARY OF THE HIGH SANDY BLUFF OVERLOOKING THE BEACH ONCE CODE-NAMED OMAHA. THERE ARE ALMOST TEN THOUSAND WHITE CROSSES AND STARS OF DAVID IN THE BEACHFRONT CEMETARY AT SAINT LAURENT. THERE USED TO BE MANY MORE AMERICANS BURIED THERE, BUT THEIR FAMILIES ASKED THAT THEY BE REMOVED FOR BURIAL ON THEIR HOME SOIL.

IT CAN BE A HAUNTING EXPERIENCE FOR ANY AMERICAN, WHO LIKE PRESIDENT CARTER, WANDERS THROUGH THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS ROWS OF WHITE CROSSES AND STARS, ON TOP OF THE CLIFF WHERE AMERICAN TROOPS SCALED THE THIRTY-METER-HIGH BLUFF, WHILE THE GERMANS ABOVE ROLLED HAND GRENADES DOWN ON THEM. THE QUIET THERE NOW IS COMPLETE. EVEN THE SEAGULLS WHEELING OVERHEAD SEEM MUTED.

VOICE: (CONT) THE ALMOST ENDLESS ROWS OF CROSSES AT OMAHA BEACH IS JUST ONE OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY CEMETARIES IN EUROPE. THERE ARE OTHER PEACEFUL BURIALS GROUNDS THERE FOR AMERICANS WHØ GAVE THEIR LIVES SO THAT EUROPE MIGHT BE FREE.

AT THE END OF THE EUROPEAN WAR, WHEN THE AMERICAN TROOPS PULLED BACK TO THE RESTRAINING LINES AGREED UPON WITH THE SOVIET UNION, THERE WERE MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED FULL-STRENGTH ALLIED DIVISIONS ON THE GROUND IN EUROPE, BACKED BY A MIGHTY AIR FORCE AND NAVY, ALL UNDER GENERAL EISENHOWER'S COMMAND.

PRESIDENT CARTER, THE U.S. COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, OBSERVED WHILE IN NORMANDY THAT 200 THOUSAND U.S. SOLDIERS ARE NOW COMMITTED TO EUROPE TO HELP MAKE SURE THAT ITS FREEDOM IS NOT THREATENED AGAIN. IN PARIS, HE TOLD A FRENCH-AMERICAN AUDIENCE THAT THE COMMITMENT OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE TO EUROPE'S SECURITY IS, IN MR. CARTER'S OWN WORDS "ABSOLUTE." HE NOTED THAT THERE ARE ABOUT 30 THOUSAND AMERICAN TROOPS BURIED IN EUROPE FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND 60 THOUSAND BURIED THERE FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR. AND THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT, HE PLEDGED, THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN IN EUROPE WHATEVER FORCES ARE NEEDED TO MAINTAIN ITS SOLEMN COMMITTMENT.

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